

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 1684

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NU

SUBJECT: DUBON REPLACED AS SECRETARY OF PRESIDENCY

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED THE RESIGNATION OF CARLOS DUBON AS SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCE AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY MANUEL CENTENO. CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING DUBON'S DEPARTURE ARE HAZY.

1. PRESIDENT SOMOZA ANNOUNCED AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON APRIL 8 THAT CARLOS DUBON, SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY, HAD ASKED TO BE RELIEVED OF HIS POST FOR PERSONAL REASONS AND HIS RESIGNATION HAD BEEN ACCEPTED. SOMOZA SAID HE WOULD BE REPLACED BY MANUEL CENTENO CANTILLANO, " A MAN OF POPULAR EXTRACTION,WHO HAS KNOWN HOW TO WORK BOTH IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND IN THE GOVERNMENT."

2. DUBON'S LEAVING WAS RUMORED THROUGHOUT THE PREVIOUS DAY, ALTHOUGH HE MANAGED TO ATTEND A LUNCH AT THE EMBASSY RESIDENCE. THE DEPARTURE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS A GENUINE SHOCK, HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE INTELLECTUAL BRILLIANCE AND DILIGENCE WHICH DUBON HAD BROUGHT TO THE POWERFUL CABINET POST WITHOUT CREATING AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF ENEMIES. DUBON'S MARITAL PROBLEMS APPARENTLY HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIS LEAVING: TWO HOURS BEFORE THE RESIGNATION ANNOUNCEMENT HE HURRIEDLY MARRIED A BELLE OF LOCAL SOCIETY ONLY THREE DAYS AFTER HE DIVORCED HIS ITALIAN WIFE. ALTHOUGH NICARAGUA IS HARDLY PURITANICAL IN ITS SOCIAL MORES, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE

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GIRL'S FAMILY, RELATIVES OF SOMOZA, OBJECTED TO THE PRECIPITOUSNESS

OF THE WEDDING AND SOMOZA TRIED TO DELAY IT ON THIS ACOUNT. IN AN IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY, THE CIVIL WEDDING AT DUBON'S HOUSE WAS ATTENDED BY THE CREAM OF THE GON ESTABLISHMENT. WE HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT SOMOZA HAS PUT DUBON ON HIS PERSONAL PAYROLL AND SENT HIM ON A BUSINESS-HONEYMOON TRIP TO EUROPE. AS A RESULT WE SUSPECT THAT DUBON WILL RETURN TO AN INFLUENTIAL POSITION IN PUBLIC LIFE IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. HOWEVER, FOR THE MOMENT, SOMOZA HAS LOST AN INTELLIGENT AND SOMETIMES INDEPENDENT COUNSEL WHO HAS ARGUED CONSISTENTLY AGAINST CENSORSHIP AND FOR PRAGMATIC PROGRAMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE.

3. DUBON'S REPLACEMENT, CENTENO, IS AN UNKNOWN (AS DUBON PRACTICALLY WAS BEFORE HIS APPOINTMENT IN DECEMBER 1974). HE IS IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES, HAS REPORTEDLY STUDIED BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (ACCOUNTING) IN THE U.S. AND HAS AN M.A. FROM INCAE WHERE HE HAS ALSO TAUGHT. AT THE TIME OF HIS APPOINTMENT HE WAS A GENERAL MANGER OF A SOMOZA-OWNED SHIP CHANDLER AND CABOTAGE (COMSCABANIC). HE HAS BEEN DESCRIBED TO EMBASSY BY A SOMOZA OPPONENT AS "VERY INTELLIGENT, HIGHLY COMPETENT IN HIS SPECIALITIES AND ESSENTIALLY NONPOLITICAL." HOWEVER, DUBON MENTIONED TO THE USAID DIRECTOR AFTER THE ANNOUNCED CHANGES THAT HE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT CENTENO'S ABILITY TO HANDLE THE ARDUOUS AND DELICATE POSITION.

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